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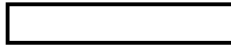
CURRENT SITUATION
and
OPTIONS
in
SOUTH VIETNAM

JCS review(s) completed.

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MORI/CDF Pages 1-7

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16 June 1965

WORKING AID FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT : Current Situation and Options
in South Vietnam

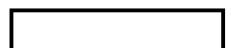
This working aid presents, in tabular form, some of the vital elements of the situation in South Vietnam and postulates certain US options for dealing with that situation.

The vertical column lists the major participants in the situation; the horizontal bar lists elements of the situation or US options. At each intersection, therefore, will be found statements relating one of the participants to an element of the situation or stating that participant's estimated response to a US option.

Where published Special National Intelligence Estimates or ONE memoranda are applicable to a given option, these are cited in a source reference; otherwise the statements represent the judgment of the CIA Vietnam Working Group. Statements are numbered by combining the Roman numeral in the vertical column with the Arabic numeral on the horizontal bar; e.g. IB5 refers to the South Vietnamese reaction to the US option postulated in column 5 of the table.

A Top Secret table approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in November 1964 is attached as an annex; it postulates certain Communist military actions and suggests US/GVN responses as foreseen at that time. Use of the JCS table in this context has not been authorized by the Department of Defense.

PREPARED BY THE CIA VIETNAM WORKING GROUP



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	1	2	3
	Minimum Objectives & Interests	Current Tactics	Stated Conditions for Negotiations
US I-A	1. Containment of Chicom expansionism in SEA. 2. Establishment of a stable, independent, non-Communist government in Saigon. 3. Cessation of hostile armed activity in SVN. -----	1. Limited bombing of north to hamper infiltration, hearten SVN, and eventually hurt DRV enough to cause it to call off war. 2. Improvement of balance of forces through intensified local recruitment and deployment of US and other forces. 3. Compete with Viet Cong for popular support through wide variety of civic and military measures including pressure for better local and national government.	None, other than unwillingness to deal with Liberation Front.
SVN I-B	1. Physical & economic security 2. Survival as an independent entity 3. Preservation of traditional social & cultural patterns		
NVN II-A	1. Force US out of South Vietnam 2. Set up coalition government under Communist influence. ----- Same	1. Supply of men and arms to Viet Cong 2. Threaten overt introduction of "volunteers" from the north. 3. Generate international pressures on US to withdraw. -----	Insists it has no "preconditions", only "working principles", which center around cessation of bombings against DRV, recognition of Front, US withdrawal.
VIET CONG II-B		1. Destruction of ARVN units and will to resist. 2. Terrorism, agitation and subversion aimed at disrupting SVN political and social order.	Essentially the same as DRV, but often stated as "preconditions".
III COMMUNIST CHINA	1. Elimination of US influence from SVN 2. Set up Communist-dominated, pro-Chinese government in Saigon. 3. Take credit for any Communist victory in SVN to prove Chicom methods are better than Soviet in fighting US. 4. Preservation of a Communist regime in NVN.	1. Supply of military aid to DRV and VC. 2. Propaganda and diplomatic support for DRV and VC. 3. Psychological warfare, including threats of intervention.	No stated conditions of its own but Peiping has strongly endorsed the position taken by DRV and NFLSV.
IV USSR	1. Avoidance of general war. 2. Take as much credit as possible from any Communist victory in South Vietnam and deny credit to Peiping. 3. Preservation of a Communist regime in NVN. 4. Limit spread of Chinese influence in SE Asia.	1. Supply of military equipment to DRV. 2. Political pressures on US to negotiate on DRV/VC terms.	None stated on its own. Has voiced support for DRV and NFLSV positions. Has stated belief that the first step toward negotiations must be cessation of bombings.
V GENERAL			

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	US OPTIONS AND PROBABLE RESPONSES		
	4	5	6
	Current Prospects	US Option #1	US Option #2
US	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bombing thus far had little impact either on ability or willingness of DRV to support war in south. Government forces hard pressed as Viet Cong intensify offensive operations. Political instability in Saigon weakening war effort and bringing pacification activities to virtual standstill. 	<p>Terminate commitments in SVN and withdraw under conditions which impair US standing elsewhere as little as possible.</p> <p>----</p> <p>Political and military collapse.</p>	<p>Continue according to present plans, using only those forces currently programmed and avoiding major escalation in NVN.</p> <p>----</p> <p>GVN will probably be unable to cope with mounting VC military pressure and ARVN may be defeated or virtually destroyed on field of battle.</p>
SVN			
NVN			
VIET CONG	Presently favorable for the destruction of ARVN fighting ability and morale.	<p>Triumphant propaganda boasting about success of Vietnamese people in throwing out foreign "aggressor". Early moves to establish at least <u>de facto</u> political control over all of Vietnam.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Early moves to smash remaining vestiges of anti-Communist authority and to absorb South Vietnamese government under VC banner.</p>	<p>Steady increase of support to VC, continued disinterest in negotiations and hardening of DRV attitude.</p> <p>----</p> <p>Constant increase in military pressure on GVN and in political agitation and terrorism, especially in urban areas.</p>
COMMUNIST CHINA	The closer the ARVN comes to defeat, the better the Chinese Communist position.	<p>Vindication of theses on "US paper tiger" and national liberation strategy.</p> <p>Employment of Communist victory in Vietnam to improve China's standing in world Communist movement to detriment of USSR.</p> <p>Increase in pressure on Laos, Cambodia, and Northern Thailand.</p>	<p>Continued encouragement to Hanoi to persevere and not be seduced by negotiation offers.</p> <p>Additional promises of support to NVN, particularly if it appears that such support will not be needed.</p>
USSR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dim for arranging a negotiated settlement. Only fair for countering Chicoms boasts that Vietnam war proves its thesis on revolution correct. Placed in increasingly difficult position as war escalates. 	<p>Increased problems with Peiping in World Communist Movement.</p> <p>Re-examination of estimates of US staying power in face of "liberation wars" and, perhaps, increased support of "liberation movements" in Africa and Latin America.</p>	<p>Will probably not even try to urge early negotiations on Hanoi. Will probably continue to provide support, at least in terms of material assistance to improve DRV's air defense capability, including radar and, perhaps, additional SAMs.</p>
GENERAL		<p>Initial relief at cessation of hostility and diminished risk of general war.</p> <p>Widespread belief that US had failed in test case of its ability to cope with insurgency.</p> <p>Asian countries would review their relations with US and Peiping and would downgrade importance and value of US backing and support.</p>	<p>Continued criticism of US involvement in Vietnam and increasing disbelief in possibility of US/GVN success.</p> <p>25X1</p>

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	7 US Option #3	8 US Option #4	9 US Option #5
US	Major augmentation and commitment of US Forces to offensive action (per Westmoreland suggestion) but avoiding major escalation in NVN.	Combine option #2 with unrestricted aerial warfare in NVN.	Combining option #3 with unrestricted aerial warfare in NVN.
SVN	Ambivalent reaction; encouragement but some tendency to "let US do it". Probably improvement in military situation, but actual result would depend on how US Forces used and key determinant would be effectiveness of total effort, political as well as military.	Morale would be heartened by punishment of north, but situation on ground in SVN would be about as described in option #2.	Improvement of morale and capability for coping with VC pressure but ultimate test would still be that of combat and effectiveness of total program (See #3)
NVN	No lessening of determination to win but would recognize task had become harder. Combat results would be real test. DRV would step up its support, including additional NVN line units. If tide of battle ran heavily against VC, might consider negotiations.	So long as Communist progress was being made on the ground in SVN, Hanoi would probably persevere.	Unless VC decisively checked on ground in SVN, DRV would probably persevere. If VC so checked would probably seek negotiations.
VIET CONG		VC would press on as described above in option #2. Reduced DRV resupply capabilities might eventually be felt but not for some time and issue might be decided by then.	Would persevere as in #3 above unless or until ordered to desist by Hanoi.
COMMUNIST CHINA	Would urge VC and DRV to continue struggle. Would promise more aid should US invade NVN. Might make some troop movements in Southern China to underscore commitment but would probably not intervene at this stage.	So long as Communists think they are winning in SVN, Peiping unlikely to intervene with ground forces. Commitment of Chinese aircraft and pilots based in NVN, likely; Chicom air operations from bases in China less likely unless Chinese territory actually attacked. Chicom attacks elsewhere in Asia (off shores, Taiwan, Korea) unlikely.	As in #4, but would make obvious troop movements as if to intervene.
USSR	Problems would grow more acute. Would see no alternative to continued support for DRV. In time might have to face awkward choice of moving toward withdrawal or accepting risks of deepening Soviet commitment.	So long as Communists think they are winning in SVN, USSR most unlikely to intervene with ground forces. New pressures and threats against US. Further military aid if feasible.	As in #4 Appearance "volunteers" possible.
GENERAL	Those who doubt US ability to avoid defeat would think agony being prolonged and escalation risks increased. Governments which support US would come under increasing criticism.	Criticism (including domestic) of US action would mount sharply as would pressure on -- and from -- allied governments. Condemnation from UN likely.	As in #4 but more so.

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JCS Postulation of Possible Communist Actions and Possible US/GVN Countermove

30 November 1964

Communist Action

Possible US/Allied Countermove

Comment

1. Stepped up VC operations.

VC might attack US/GVN bases, terrorize US citizens, try to disrupt SVN govt and economy with increased terror, sabotage, attacks in Saigon, provincial capitals, and rural areas.

- a. Take additional security measures, including dispersal outside SVN of some US air and adding US/GVN ground forces for base security and for protection of key cities or installations.
- b. Step up attack on infiltration targets.
- c. Evacuate unessential non-combatants.
- d. Carry out reprisals in dramatic cases.

We cannot prevent stepped up VC operations, but, unless the SVN Government topples, the VC could harass but not stop US/GVN strike programs (which could be conducted entirely from outside SVN).

2. DRV or Chicom air attacks on SVN or US carriers.

The DRV Air Force (if not crippled by US strikes) can conduct fighter-bomber attacks against northern SVN and close-in carriers. From Hainan, Chicom fighter-bombers can reach northern half of SVN, and bombers can reach all of SVN and carriers in So. China Sea.

- a. If Communist attack small, consider a limited reprisal.
- b. If large and only DRV involved: (1) US/GVN airstrike DRV airfields, POL and support facilities to kill the DRV Air Force; (2) reinforce air defenses in SVN as insurance against Chicom air strikes; (3) alert US ground forces for deployment to SEA.
- c. If large and Chicoms involved: (1) US air intercept, engage in "hot pursue" Chicom aircraft; (2) US air strike air bases and related facilities in South China; (3) to forestall Chicom ground action, US air strike interdiction-type targets in South China; (4) consider hitting Chicom nuclear production facilities; (5) begin major deployments to SEA and West Pac to provide against the contingency of Chicom ground intervention.

Air superiority over DRV should be achievable in 2 days, over South China in 5 days. If Chicoms openly intervene and US conducts strikes on the Chinese homeland, the risk of further escalation would be great.

3. DRV ground attack against SVN or Laos.

The DRV, for reasons of rear area security and coast defense, has only 5 deployable divisions. It can, depending on weather, put and support 2 (in 48 hrs) to 5 divisions across the DMZ and/or up to 3 into Laos.

- a. Defense: GVN ground defense, augmented quickly by US ground forces.
- b. Offense: (1) US/GVN interdiction, attrition and punitive air attacks on NVN; (2) US harbor mining and naval blockade; (3) early US/GVN ground offensive (consider seizing and occupying some or all of NVN).
- c. Major deployments: Begin major US deployments to SEA and West Pac to provide against the contingency of Chicom intervention.

SVN's army would be outnumbered 2 or more to 1. It can resist initially with 1 div, plus an airborne brigade as lift became available. The ARVN's counter-VC role would slow further reinforcement.

4. Chicom/DRV ground attack into SE Asia.

If not interdicted, the Chicom/DRV, depending on weather, can put and support 7-24 divisions into SEA. First Chicom forces could enter South Vietnam in 10 days.

- In addition to actions in para 3 above:
- d. Extend air strikes and blockade to So. China, increase US ground forces in SEA to 5-2/3 divisions, and employ US naval and air forces on a large scale against China.
 - e. Consider attacking Chicom nuclear production facilities.
 - f. Stress either a ground offensive to seize North Vietnam (per OPLAN 32-64) or air and naval action designed to drive Red China out of the war (per OPLAN 39-65). Nuclear strikes if necessary.

US air countermove could be brought to bear on short notice. US ground forces, if not deployed in advance, would be arriving in the area slower than Chinese forces, unless the latter were successfully interdicted.

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**SOURCE SHEET
(Options)**

OPTION #1

I-B-5 through V-5: Working Group judgment; this option has not previously been considered by CIA or the USIB.

OPTION #2

I-B-6: Working Group judgment; MACV (Westmoreland cable) is even more gloomy.

II-6 through V-6: Working Group judgment; in accord with tenor of recent estimates though latter have not been specifically addressed to this option.

OPTION #3

I-B-7 through V-7: ONE 10 June 65 coordinated memorandum "Reactions to a Further US Buildup in South Vietnam".

OPTION #4

I-B-8: Working Group judgment; not specifically addressed in earlier estimates.

II-8 through IV-8: Covered by statement or implication in 11 June 65 ONE Briefing Paper.

V-8: Working Group judgment; not really covered in earlier estimates.

OPTION #5

I-B-9: Working Group judgment.

II-9 through V-9: Covered in part in ONE Briefing Paper, 11 June 65.

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CONTROL AND COVER SHEET FOR TOP SECRET DOCUMENT

Prepared by CIA Vietnam
Working Group

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